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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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CHICAGO, ILL.

AN INQUIRY
INTO THE
NATURE AND EXTENT
OF THE
HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH;

BY
GEORGE HATLEY NORTON, JR.,
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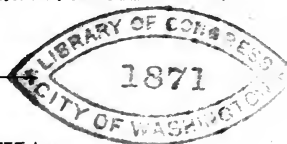
“Πανήγυρις ἐστὶ πνευματικὴ ἡ Ἐκκλησία τοῦ Θεοῦ.”—
Chrysostom, Homil. xxxii.

“Ubi est Fides, illic est Ecclesia.”—
Hierom. in Matt. Hom. vi.

PHILADELPHIA:

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1853.



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P R E F A C E .

THE substance of this little Volume was delivered, in a course of lectures, to the Author's congregation, during the last Lenten season. It does not profess to be more than its title indicates, viz.: An Inquiry into the Nature and Extent of the Holy Catholic Church. All ecclesiastical questions, however important, are carefully avoided, except those coming directly in the way of such an investigation.

As the argument is entirely Scriptural, and as some views are maintained, supposed by others to be at variance with the standards of the Protestant Episcopal Church, it was originally designed to add a *sixth* chapter, containing proofs of the entire harmony of our sentiments with those of the Reformers, the Prayer Book, and the ablest Di-

vines of England and America. The plan was relinquished, not from any want of evidence, but from its superabundance and voluminous character, requiring much space. The temptation to deviate from our resolve of silence, upon this subject, was peculiarly strong, when advocating such liberal notions, with respect to Christians living beyond the Episcopal pale, as are now denounced by many as treason against the principles of Protestant Episcopacy.

It would be easy for one having access to the authorities, to prove that the liberal theory of Catholic comprehension is entirely accordant with our standards, while the opposite system not only is unsupported by them, but is positively hostile to them.

It is sometimes hard to repress an honest indignation which rises in the soul, when those who delight to dwell upon and exhibit to the world the enlarged benevolence of our beloved Zion, are taunted as traitors, and that too by men who are endeavouring to cramp and constrain every record testifying to her

generous emotions, into the limited dimensions of their own singularly misnamed Catholicity. Be it ours to recognise and honour the witness she has left of her *true* Catholic heart. Be it ours to imitate the conduct of her brightest ornaments, and to walk, though at infinite distance, in the consecrated footsteps of her martyrs and confessors, who died protesting against the enormities of Popery, and declaring their spiritual union with the good of all lands.

The reformed ecclesiastical bodies of Europe, in their early days, felt strongly the ties of Catholic brotherhood. It was natural they should so feel. The superstitions and abominations, which induced a reformation, had been their common foe; persecution and martyrdom was the price each paid for liberty. Brought out of darkness and degradation into the same glorious light; children of one birth, rocked in the same rough cradle; their first impulse, when individual consciousness awoke, was to hail each other as members of Christ's household. The likeness of one Father was

stamped upon their countenance; common blessings and common dangers drew them together, as by kindred instinct; they went to the old family Bible, (so long neglected,) to study their lineage, and found, by indubitable evidence, that begotten of God, by the power of the Holy Ghost, their parentage was the same.

The discovery was recognised in a variety of ways. The letters which passed between the highest dignitaries of the English Church, and the continental Reformers, would excite unfeigned astonishment from those, who, in our day, are taught by revered Pastors, with tiresome reiteration, that the Protestant Episcopal Church is perched on some *high* peak, "as far from Rome on the one hand, as from Geneva on the other."

The Episcopal Church of England and America, by her Catholic standards and formularies, by the enlarged Christian views of her Reformers, and by the general tone of her theological writings, until a comparatively recent period, has erected a monument

of charity, which may well make her respected and beloved by the Christian World; which is enough to encourage the hearts of those who would fain act up honestly to the principles of their Holy Mother, and to shame the pretension, not to say undutiful scandal of others, who, though nursed in her arms, would blacken her character, distort her love-beaming features, and paint her a disparaging bigot. For what wise reason it has pleased our Heavenly Father to suffer Episcopalians of modern times to recede so far from the faith of their Fathers, remains to be seen.

If this humble effort shall be the means of awakening one son of the Church to a better state of mind, the author will feel amply rewarded.

WARRENTON, Jan. 31st, 1853.

AN INQUIRY, ETC.



CHAPTER I.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ, usually translated *church*, is derived from a verb signifying to call out or to assemble : viz. as heralds, by authority of some superior power. The word was applied in the Old Testament to the nation of Israel, assembled either for political or religious purposes; because the affairs of church and state among the Jews were managed by the same governors, and the same officers could summon them for war and for worship.

In about one half the cases where congregation is used in the Old Testament, the word church might have been employed with equal propriety; and that translation is given in the Septuagint. Where the Seventy do not render *קהל* (*kahal*) by *ἐκκλησία*, they use *συναγωγή*, which has nearly the same meaning.

Our Saviour took this word *ἐκκλησία*, with which the Jews were well acquainted, to denote that larger assembly he had come to gather from all nations, and

which commissioned heralds would *call together* by his authority.

In the New Testament, bodies of Christians residing in one city are called churches. We read of the church at Jerusalem, Ephesus, Cenchræa, Corinth, Laodicea, &c. Even smaller companies are likewise called churches: as, for example, the worshippers in the house of Priscilla and Aquila, (Rom. xvi. 5; 1 Cor. xvi. 19,) those in the house of Nymphas, (Col. iv. 15,) and those in the house of Philemon, (Phil. 2)

To larger companies of Christians than such as were found in single cities, the word is never applied, except in the plural number, until we reach the universal company of Christians, called, in theological language, the Holy Catholic Church. No provincial or national ecclesiastical organization is spoken of as a church. When the Christians of a province are mentioned, the plural is always used.—Thus, while Luke speaks of the *church* in Antioch, in Jerusalem, in Cæsarea, (Acts viii. 1, 3; xi. 22, 26; xviii. 22,) the evangelists and apostles uniformly say the *churches* of Samaria, Judea, Galilee, Macedonia and Galatia, (Acts ix. 31; 1 Cor. xvi. 1; Gal. i. 2, 22.)

The passages in which the universal church is mentioned are comparatively few; and as most, if not all, will be cited in the course of this work, it is not important to enumerate them here.

A discrimination among the various senses in which the word church is used in the Bible, is of the utmost

consequence. Much false doctrine, in regard of the nature, extent, unity, and notes of the Catholic church, is owing to neglect of this discrimination. Expressions applicable to the church in its visible, organized nature, precepts binding only upon individual congregations, and attributes of the one spiritual company of converted men, are mingled together; and for delivery from the confusion arising in a well ordered mind in view of such discordant elements, many are glad to seek refuge in any plausible theory which promises harmony.*

* Every student, desirous of forming a correct and scriptural view of Christ's church, should take a concordance of the Greek Testament, and examine carefully every passage where the word *ἐκκλησία* is used. Having ascertained, as well he can from the context, its meaning in each place, let him classify and generalize the definitions thus gained, arranging in order the different texts under their appropriate heads. If he pursue the same course in regard of the equivalent and figurative terms applied to Christ's kingdom, he will have done more towards gaining a clear and comprehensive view of the subject, than by much reading of treatises, which are too apt to cite only those texts the author deems important for the support of his own opinions. The mere English reader will find great assistance from a corresponding use of Cruden, or of the Englishman's Greek Concordance. The thorough student will not of course feel satisfied until he has examined the usage of *לִקְוָה* in the Hebrew of the Old Testament, of *ἐκκλησία* and *συναγωγή* in the Septuagint, and as much, at least, of Patristic terminology as Suicer gives.

No apology is needed for employing the terms equivalent to *ἐκκλησία* in their Scripture signification. Every class of writers upon the church has pursued the same course. The terms referred to are, "the kingdom of Heaven," "the kingdom of God," "the body of Christ," "the house of God," and the "temple of God." The same law of discrimination of course belongs to the equivalents, which governs the chief word, but with this caution in mind we shall use all alike.

The object of our inquiry is, the nature and extent of the largest ecclesiastical community known to the New Testament writers, called, emphatically, *the church*, to establish which was the end of our Saviour's acts and sufferings. At the outset of such an investigation, it is proper certain facts and principles should be agreed upon. Unless men can coincide in the premises, it is useless to expect an agreement in the conclusion.

I. First, then, I remark that the New Testament holds out no encouraging promise to such as are not members of Christ's church. It seems every where to assume that saved men of every name and nation will belong to the Catholic fold, and it gives no intimation that any child of Adam will be rescued from eternal ruin, unless his title has been secured to a place in the divinely instituted *ἐκκλησία*.

In view of the important differences of opinion in respect of the limits of the one true church, the question of salvation, beyond its bounds, becomes of

painful interest. But we cannot wrest the plain Scriptures to relieve the difficulties in which men involve themselves; because, although we may pervert the record, the facts to which it testifies remain the same. Let the truth then be spoken. Let the voice of Scripture be heard. Let it go forth and be revered as the word of God, though human theories be proven false.

The whole world is described, in the New Testament, as lying in hopeless condemnation, save that company which Christ *calls out* (*ἐκκαλεῖ*) from the regions of sin and death. This company is spoken of as one Body, (Eph. iii. 6; iv. 4; 1 Cor. xii. 13, 20;) the Body of Christ, (1 Cor. xii. 27; Eph. iv. 12, 15,) which is his Church, (Eph. v. 23; Col. i. 18.) Of this ecclesiastical body Christ is the Saviour (Eph. v. 23,) not merely in the sense he is styled Saviour of the world, by dying for all, and thereby making their salvation *possible*, (John iv. 42; 1 John iv. 14;) but by uniting them to himself, in union close as that which subsists between the members and head of a human body, making their salvation *actual*. For this church he gave himself, (Eph. v. 25.) This church, already in a state of salvation, he nourisheth and cherisheth as his own flesh, (Eph. v. 29, 30.) There is no intimation of his being, in this *effectual* sense,* the Sa-

* The author's language must not be construed to favour a limited atonement.

viour of any not incorporated into his body,—the church.

The church is sometimes called the House, City or Temple of God, and it seems as if this dwelling were to contain *all* the saved. "Upon this rock," says Christ, "I will *build* my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," (Matt. xvi. 18.) Who can suppose the blessed Saviour speaking of any other than the whole company he rescues from the "gates of hell,"—the whole number, who, being lively stones, chosen of God, and precious, are built up a spiritual house, (1 Pet. ii. 4. 5,) upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone? (Eph. ii. 20.) This spiritual temple is the dwelling place of God, and is composed of *all* his people, (1 Cor. iii. 17; 2 Cor. vi. 16; Rev. xxi. 3; xxii. 14, 15.)

The church, again, is represented as the Bride of Christ, (Eph. v. 31, 32.) But when the angel took John, in apocalyptic vision, to see the bride, the Lamb's wife, he showed him the whole city of the saved, (Rev. xxi. 9, 10.)

The church is called the Fulness of Christ, (Eph. i. 23.) This expression surely implies that the church is composed of *all* Christ's portion of the world. His measure is *filled*; the results of his travail and sorrow are all included; he has his complement or *full* number, "for it pleased the Father, that in him should *all* fulness dwell," (Col. i. 19.)

The mode in which the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Heaven are spoken of, plainly shows that salvation is limited to members of that kingdom. The terms are applied to the whole family of God's people, militant and triumphant. Sometimes the main reference is to earthly circumstances, and at others to heavenly blessedness; but the two senses are so interchanged and intermingled, as to leave the unavoidable impression that to be a member of Christ's kingdom is to live under God's favour, accepted and beloved, an heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ; whereas to be without that kingdom is to perish for time and for eternity.

Seeking an entrance to God's kingdom is considered the great paramount object of existence, (Matt. vi. 33; Luke xii. 31.) Not to enter it is held up as an awful doom, with expressions of solemn asseveration, (John iii. 3, 5.) Any temporal sacrifice is not counted too great to secure admission, and the alternative is considered death and eternal ruin. "It is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell-fire, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched," (Mark ix. 47, 48.)*

* The fact that Christ's church contains all who are to be saved, should be strongly fixed in our minds. It gives a position from which important inferences may be drawn. If any are in doubt about the matter, therefore, we would request them

II. I remark, in the next place, that if there is a church any where in the world, membership in which is essential to salvation, that church must be clearly marked out and delineated in the Bible, so that men may readily know *where* it is found, and *how* admittance is gained. Otherwise God would be a hard master, reaping where he has not sown, and gathering where he has not strewed. If he requires us to be members of his church, and yet does not tell us where and what his church is, how can we be blamed for disobedience?

And if he has told us at all, where are we to expect instruction from him, unless it be in the Bible? Men may claim divine authority for their traditions, but the voice of reason is the voice of our 6th article,—“Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation, so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.”

With the old question, “An ecclesiæ cognitio præcedere debeat cognitionem doctrinæ,” it is needless

to pause, to examine every passage in the Bible where the church in its universal sense is spoken of, and see if any intimation is given that salvation is attained (not attainable) beyond its pale. A candid examination will, we think, establish the absence of any such intimation, and likewise the existence of an almost irresistible *implication* that none are saved who are not members of Christ's church.

for us, in our present inquiry, to meddle. It is certain no society, calling itself the church of Jesus Christ, can claim rational allegiance from a solitary individual, unless he be satisfied, upon valid testimony, that such society is the genuine *ἐκκλησία*. There must be a witness from God himself, proclaiming, This is the way, this is the fold, this is the door,—or else no moral obligation is created, compelling man's obedience.

And where shall such witness be found? In the assumptions of unity, sanctity, apostolicity, and catholicity, put forth by some? It will be asked, in return, what evidence does unity of doctrine or communion furnish, unless the doctrine be proved the doctrine of Paul and Peter, and unless the communion be identified with the requirements of Christ? What sanctity can challenge respect except that which conforms to the New Testament precepts? What apostolicity is worth our notice which cannot show a present, living sameness with the apostolicity of Scripture days? And what is catholicity, unless it be the comprehension of that wide fold whose boundaries the Bible marks? Establish all these notes, and show their union in an existing society, and you have proved nothing, unless you show likewise their conformity with the church described in the New Testament.

Apart from the witness of Scripture, the oldest doc-

* Palmer on the Church, vol. i. Catechism of Trent, art. Holy Catholic Church.

trines and external institutions, even when transmitted carefully by personal and tactual succession, have no claim upon our adherence. We must be certified that the doctrines now held, and the rites now used, were the same God delivered to his church. And how can this be shown? By a book written at God's command, and vouched for by miracles which God only could work. Any other testimony is insufficient, because it would not come from the only authoritative source. Man's traditions, oral and written, might affirm the needful facts, but a divine warrant would still be wanting. It would be going too far to say the Almighty *could* not bear witness to the nature and extent of his church in any other way than by inspired writings; but it may be safely contended he *has* not done so.

Shall our respect be asked for modern miracles, the inventions of designing priestcraft, as a present proof of Divine warrant? We must wait until the sneers of professed worshippers are put to rest, and the jeers of spectators silenced.

Upon the platform of Scripture, then, we take our stand, and maintain that any church theory, "which is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man to be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation."*

* The great reason why so much diversity of opinion now exists upon the subject we are discussing, is because men, in-

Unless the true church can be found by an unprejudiced reader in the Bible, we care not to look for it. We are unwilling to receive it upon man's authority; we must be directed by the finger of God, or else we walk uncertainly and doubtfully.

III. The question of the nature and extent of Christ's church is one every man must settle for *himself*. No man is competent to determine it for him, and no body of men is authorized to relieve him from the responsibility.

Even those who contend for an infallible church must agree to this; because even if there be an infallible church, whose decisions we are all bound unhesitatingly to admit, yet we must use our own judgment in ascertaining where it can be found.

It is not enough to say, "Hear the church, submit to her teachings;" because the question necessarily arises, *Where* is the church? Men say, she is here. Men say, she is there. Men say, she is at Rome,—in England,—where the Pope is honoured,—where Bishops are respected,—where Presbyterianism, or Baptism, or Methodism prevails. But who shall decide among the numberless claims and theories of

stead of coming with unprejudiced hearts to the Bible, and asking what God's decision is, first form their own system, either according to caprice or education, and then wrest the Scriptures into conformity with their views. By such a process the Bible may be made to mean any thing or nothing.

men? Where is the ecclesiastical body, so manifesting its claims to the senses as to obviate all use of reason? There is none. A claim of the sort begins and ends in absurdity.

The Romanist even does not practically make such claim; because we find him using arguments, and reasonings, and evidences, to satisfy men that his church is the true Catholic church; and what does this mean but that the question must be settled, every man for himself. The blindest submissionist, ready to kneel before church authority, must find that authority, or must *think* he has found it, before he can bow to it; and how can he find it unless he look—unless he inquire? And when the inquiry has ended, he has settled the matter for himself.

IV. We should make up our minds to the possibility of arriving at a judgment very different from that with which we set out. Unless we do this, our investigation amounts to nothing. If we make up our opinion beforehand, all examination of a subject is mockery and foolishness.

Men oftentimes boast of their *consistency*; they are not driven about by every wind and tide of doctrine. They never change their opinions.

I grant you they may be consistent; for a man who abides in one place, and never alters his views, because he never grows wiser, is always consistent. There is no consistency like that of the determined, obstinate, theory-wedded, unchangeably ignorant

man. Wrapt in the mantle of self-satisfied opinion, all proofs and reasons go for nothing in his estimation. The sun of demonstration may shine upon him, but will not change his views, because he is unalterably, blindly, wilfully fixed. There is no hope of such a man.

It is our duty, indeed, to form our opinions so carefully as to obviate the necessity of frequent change; but we should remember that the wisest see only a little way, and are liable to error, and that the noblest of all consistency is an unswerving determination to receive the truth, come from whatever source it may, and conflict with whatever preconceived notions it will. He is the truly consistent man, whose mind, loving truth, looks away from and above the prejudices and prepossessions which encompass it, and pays homage to the revelation of fact and reality.

We should set out, therefore, in any investigation, admitting to ourselves that our views may be changed.

V. We should be anxious, upon examining the boundaries of spiritual Zion, to find as many as possible of our fellow-men included within its walls.

There is a feeling of religious aristocracy which drives men, in other respects candid and liberal, into the adoption and maintenance of the narrowest and most niggardly views concerning Christ's kingdom. Instead of rejoicing to find, in the Bible, such a large ark of safety as may embrace and rescue from destruction multitudes; they would seem glad to prove ac-

according to statements of Scripture, that the Christian fold is limited in extent, and that it contains very few of those who profess and call themselves Christians.

Such men are oftentimes more generous in their feelings than in their views; and, frequently, after having satisfied their exclusive notions by verbally shutting the door of Christ's temple in the faces of their fellow believers, by a noble inconsistency, rise above their narrow dogmas, and do kind Christian offices towards their brethren in the Lord.

It is better for men not to be consistent than to be entirely wrong; but it is best of all they should form such Scriptural and well founded views, with reference to the church, as may authorize the most liberal and unrestrained fraternity towards every child of Jesus.

Let us beware, then, how we suffer this excluding spirit to influence our interpretations of the Bible. Let us come to investigate the church question with enlarged Christian hearts. Let us remember we are inquiring about the kingdom of that kind Saviour who would not have any to perish, but that all should come to a knowledge of the truth. Let us remember that he died, not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world: that, as his mercies were limited to no class or nation, so we should extend our charities to all, and so far from being glad that millions who now profess Christ are standing upon doubtful, if not upon dangerous ground, we should earnestly hope to find

the same substantial Rock of ages under *their* feet, which we feel beneath our own, and the same arms of our catholic mother embracing them which we find enclosing us.

VI. We should be on our guard, on the other hand, lest a spurious and unwarranted sympathy make us open wider the door of Christ's church than he himself has opened it.

We must not go one jot or tittle beyond the letter of the Bible. Wherever the Bible shows a member of Christ's church, however his views and rites may differ from our own, we should gladly extend a brother's hand and a brother's love. But where the Bible pauses, we should pause likewise. We may be anxious to recognise some, for whom we have kind feelings, as fellow-members of Christ's church, but; unless the Saviour has signed and sealed to them a promise, unless the impress of his finger is upon their brow, marking them for his children, we have no right to own them as belonging to the one true fold.

It is not the church of our feelings, it is not the church of our wishes, it is not the church of our fancy or construction, we have to deal with; but the church of the Bible—one, holy, and catholic,—whose walls were established by a Divine builder,—whose gates God openeth, and no man shutteth,—whose gates God shutteth, and no man openeth.

VII. We should determine this question with reference to eternity, and to that strict account we shall all give of our opinions as well as our acts.

It is not, as many suppose, a light and trifling matter we have to consider, but a great and solemn subject. We are aiming at a discovery of the metes and bounds of that kingdom which Christ has instituted as a nursery for heaven. And our opinions on this subject not only are important, so far as our own interests are concerned, but they likewise influence our feelings and actions towards others. We should form our opinions, therefore, not as mere denizens of earth, but as children of immortality.

How carefully do men investigate their title to a few acres of land, to a few perishable goods! Oh, how much more anxiously and seriously should we seek to know the exact limits of that Fold, within which is eternal safety, and beyond which is no Scripture ground for hope.

CHAPTER II.

TWO FALSE THEORIES REFUTED.

WHAT constitutes the Holy Catholic church? Who are its members? What are their distinguishing marks?

The numerous theories advanced to solve these questions, so far as it is important to notice them, may all be reduced to three heads. The first two, which we consider entirely without foundation, will furnish sufficient material for the present chapter; and though our discussion will terminate in an unqualified rejection of both, yet, as they are professed by millions of our fellow-men, as they have learning and power arrayed on their side, and as a right understanding of their claims will aid in comprehending the true theory, it is important we should carefully examine their pretensions.

I. The first theory affirms that the Holy Catholic church is composed of such children of Adam, in all countries, as acknowledge the authority and submit to the sway of a prince, styling himself temporal head of the universal church, and vicar of Christ; the residence of which prince and pontiff is Rome. None are reckoned members of Christ's church but such

as are in communion with this august personage, and yield obedience to him.*

In support of this theory it is affirmed, a primacy was conferred by our Lord upon Saint Peter and his successors, the bishops of Rome ; so that all who profess and call themselves Christians are bound to submit, in matters of faith and practice, to the decision and decrees of the existing Pope of Rome, under penalty of being cut off from communion with Christ's church.†

* "*Cœtum hominum, ejusdem Christianæ fidei professione, et eorundem sacramentorum communione colligatum, sub regimine legitimorum pastorum, ac præcipue unius Christi in terris Vicarii, Pontificis Romani,*" (Bellarmine, lib. 3, cap. 2.) It will be seen the distinguishing peculiarity of this definition is the subjection of all to the Roman pontiff. Strike out that clause, and you leave substantially the same definition as that considered in the latter part of this chapter.

It is not designed to give what would be a full statement of Romish doctrine in regard of the Holy Catholic church, but only enough to distinguish it from all other theories. And the same may be said of the other theory discussed in this chapter. There are many points in which all church systems unite. It is sufficient to prove the error of a false theory in its prominent characteristics.

† Pope Pius V. in Bull. contra R. Eliz., Bellar. v. 1. Pope Boniface VIII. says, "We declare, say, define, and pronounce it to be of necessity to salvation, for every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff."

I shall not travel over the wide field of arguments which may be adduced from history and reason against the claims of the Papacy—arguments so numerous and satisfactory, as to leave the adherents of Romanism no ground to stand upon. I shall not question, as some have gravely done, whether St. Peter was ever at Rome. I shall not dispute, what may still more reasonably be doubted, whether he was ever bishop of Rome.

We took our stand at the outset upon the Bible. If the claims of the Roman pontiff to the allegiance of all Christians can be established by Scripture, we are ready to yield the point. But if Scripture authority cannot be found, we are free to reject his claims.

Did the Lord Jesus Christ or his apostles give any intimation that the bishop of Rome should be supreme ruler of the church? This is the only question to be settled.

And be it remembered, it is not sufficient to prove that St. Peter enjoyed, in his own person, an authority over the other apostles, because it would not at all follow from this, that his supremacy had been transmitted to the Bishops of Rome. Unless there were some plain passage of Scripture declaring that the mantle and authority of St. Peter should descend upon the Romish bishops, no proper warrant can be found for their claims.

But no plain or even dark passage can be found, tending to establish such a doctrine. Not the least

intimation is given by any sacred writer, that the Roman bishops would, in any respect, be superior to other bishops. There is no mention whatever of the Roman Episcopate, and not the smallest *allusion* to it, unless such allusion be found, as many suppose, in the warnings of St. Paul against that man of sin, who should arise, and, sitting in the temple of God, should arrogate to himself the honour of God, and deceive many to their ruin by signs and lying wonders; or unless it be intended, as others think, by that little horn, growing up among the ten mystical horns of Daniel's vision; with eyes like a man, having a mouth speaking great things against the Most High, and wearing out the saints of the Most High, and thinking to change times and laws.

It is false reasoning, therefore, to infer, from the supposed fact of St. Peter's superiority to his fellow apostles, that the Roman bishops are of right superior to other bishops.

This is admitting, for argument's sake, that St. Peter was made by our Saviour superior in rank to the other apostles. Such an admission, however, is unnecessary; for the claims of Roman Catholics, upon this point, are entirely destitute of authority.

It seems almost wonderful, did we not know the power of prejudice and education, to find what shallow and unreasonable interpretations have been put upon a few passages in the New Testament, which are thought to sustain St. Peter's primacy.

Considerable importance, for example, is attached to the alleged fact, that when the disciples are mentioned, St. Peter is always named first. This is an old argument re-adduced in a recent work in defence of the Papal supremacy, by a Romanist bishop of our country.*

In reply, I would state that St. Peter's name is not *always* called first. There is one place where it is not. St. Paul, in Gal. ii. 9, speaks of James, the Lord's brother, before Cephas. In other passages St. Peter is named first. But what does this prove? That he was superior in rank? No usage of language can establish this. That Peter was more forward in speaking and acting than the other disciples, is readily granted. He was chief spokesman. He was the first to ask and answer questions. When Judas came to take our Lord, Peter drew his sword, and cut off the High Priest's servant's ear. This shows him of an ardent, pushing temperament.

It is natural such a person, being the most prominent actor, should be named first on most occasions. But such a precedence no more proves St. Peter superior, in office or rank, to the other apostles, than does the fact that the most frequent speakers and most prompt actors in our legislative bodies are likely to be most prominently named in the public prints, establish the superiority of one delegate or congressman

* Bishop Kenrick.

in rank above another. All congressmen are equals in office, legislative power, and rank, but the most active are usually named first. All the apostles were peers in office and rank, but St. Peter was most forward to act, and was, therefore, most prominently named.

This explanation seems entirely satisfactory of the matter. There are some, however, so wedded to system, they will perhaps even feel the force of Bossuet's argument. Remarking on John xx. 1—10, he says, "Peter and John run to the tomb. John arrives the first, but respect restrains him, and he *dare* not enter within the depths before Peter! Peter is the *first* to see the linen clothes of the burial deposited in a corner of the sacred tomb, the first spoils of conquered death." When a learned and accomplished divine can be drawn into such puerilities, it seems not surprising lesser minds should find important inferences from the fact that Peter is named before the other apostles. When the vast assertions of power and claims of authority, which issue from Rome, have no higher sanction than this, it may well be wondered enlightened and educated men should do them honour.

We find in Matt. xvi. a more imposing proof text to establish the supremacy of St. Peter—one which is paraded on all occasions, and which is thought to set the matter in an unanswerable light. Our Saviour there says, expressly, "Thou art Peter, and upon this

rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." The rock here spoken of, we are told, must certainly be Peter, and building the church upon him plainly implies his supremacy over the other apostles.

Now we cannot admit any portion of the interpretation given these words. The word rock here cannot apply to Peter without manifest violation of grammar. Our Saviour is addressing Peter. Peter therefore is in the second person. But the word *this*, preceding *πετρα*, is in the third person, and therefore cannot, according to any rule of grammar, be intended for Peter.

It might be supposed, perhaps, that after saying, "Thou art Peter," our Saviour turned to the other disciples, and spoke to *them*,—so as to make Peter in the third person; but this would be unnatural, because in the very next sentence he still addressed Peter, "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." Not the slightest intimation is given of a change of person.

Superficial readers of the Greek are deceived by a similarity in the words used in this passage: *πετρα*, which means "rock," follows immediately after *Πετρος*, which has nearly the same meaning, and this

gives some colouring for the view that the rock is Peter. But the context forbids such an interpretation. Our Saviour is not speaking of Peter, but of *himself*. He asks his disciples what views are entertained with regard to him. "They said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, and others Jeremias or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered, and said, Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God; and Jesus answered, and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven; and I say unto thee, Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church."

Jesus is speaking of his kingdom, which is a kingdom of truth, a kingdom no other foundation of which can be laid, than that is laid in Christ Jesus. Peter confesses Jesus to be the Christ. Our Saviour declares this confession to be the truth upon which he would erect his church. Upon this confession his church has been built. Jesus Christ and him crucified, proclaimed every where, received into men's hearts by faith, is the foundation upon which the kingdom of heaven has been built in the world. Upon this interpretation, our Saviour's words have a meaning suitable to his dignity and the occasion. But if we suppose him to turn aside from this great truth, and to affirm that upon Peter his church should be built, what did he mean?

It is granted, indeed, that Peter first preached both to Jews and Gentiles, but it does not follow that the church was built upon him any more than upon the other apostles. It does not follow that he was any greater in rank than the other apostles. There is nothing in Peter's history which can justify the application of this expression exclusively to him, and we are therefore inclined to adopt the other view, which is more natural, which is freer from difficulties, and which yields a sufficient meaning.

It may be urged, however, that if the word rock does not apply to Peter, yet, at all events, the latter portion of the speech must belong to him, and it must be owned Christ promised him the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Unfortunately for any inference of superiority, however, the same power is granted, in the xviii. chap., to the whole college of apostles. Our Saviour, speaking to them all, says, "Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind upon earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." And again, (John xx. 22,) he said unto them all, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." Breathing on them, he said, "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted, and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." Now whatever this power of the keys—this power of binding and loosing, forgiving and retaining—may

mean, it is plainly given to all the disciples, and not to Peter alone.*

The disciples, during the life of our Saviour, never understood these words to establish any authority of Peter over them, because they went on disputing to the last, which should be greatest in the kingdom of heaven. According to the Romish interpretation of our Saviour's language, this question had been settled. And if it be said, that, after the descent of the Holy Ghost, they were better qualified to understand our Saviour's words, yet not the slightest hint will be found that they deemed Peter their superior. On the contrary, when the college of apostles assembled to discuss the admission of the Gentiles into the church, James presided, and not Peter. Peter stood before that council, not as a superior to dictate, but as an equal to give account for baptizing Cornelius. And he proceeded, humbly, without claiming authority over his brethren, to give reasons for his conduct. St. Paul ranks himself not a whit behind the chiefest apostles; he does not even except Peter. On one occasion, he withstood Peter to the face, because he was to be blamed. Does this look like recognition of superiority in Peter? Not a shadow of authority can be found in the New Testament for such a notion. It is compa-

* The church of Rome acknowledges the powers conveyed in Matt. xvi. 19; xviii. 18; John xx. 23, to be all the same. Vide Cat. of Trent, tenth art. of Apos. Creed.

ratively a modern theory, invented for especial uses, and attempted to be foisted on the word of God. St. Peter is recognised as the official equal of John and James and Paul, but there is not a line or word within the lids of the Bible to show his supremacy.*

And if *he* had no supremacy, much less reason have those to claim it who are destitute of his inspiration, and who are fallible men. The whole theory, therefore, falls to the ground for want of proof, and the claim for submission to a Roman pontiff, as a test of church membership, is set aside.

II. The other false view of church doctrine is more interesting, because it prevails widely among Protestants. This view rejects the exclusive claim, requiring Christians to submit to one temporal head, and affirms that all are members of Christ's church who unite in professing his name through Baptism, administered by lawfully constituted ministers, and that none others are members.†

* The author does not deem it important to discuss, in a limited treatise like this, such arguments for St. Peter's supremacy as that derived from the injunction of our Lord to feed the Christian flock; from his walking on the sea; from his change of name; from his miraculous draught of fish, &c. For a full view of all Scriptures adduced, relevant and irrelevant, important and trifling, vide Barrow on the Pope's Supremacy.

† "We know of no state of salvation except the kingdom of God. We know of no admission into that kingdom but by

It is taken for granted that the baptized persons will continue subject to lawful pastors,* and conform to all moral and ritual requirements. But baptism is considered the door of the church.

baptism.”—Primary Charge of Bishop Terrot. “Scripture and the universal church appoint only one mode in which Christians are to be made members of the church. It is baptism which renders us, by divine right, members of the church, and entitles us to all the privileges of the faithful.”—Palmer on the Church, vol. i. p. 144.

Among the advocates of this view, Palmer stands pre-eminent for ability, learning, candour, and liberality. He exhibits the working of a manly and noble spirit, and one cannot but regret that his mind is not as firmly established in the true doctrine of church existence and bounds, as in that to which he has devoted himself.

* Palmer, vol. i. p. 28. Oxford Tracts, passim. The same remark made with regard to our definition of the Romish theory applies to this. We do not state any thing but that portion of the doctrine which differs essentially from all others. The definition of Christ’s church, given by Palmer, vol. i. p. 28, as well as that given in the Catechism of Trent, contains much from which no one need dissent. But when the Romanist requires submission to a human Head, and when the Romanist and the Protestant unite in making the true church a visible corporation, into which men are admitted by Baptism, the Biblical student is compelled to differ from them. It will be seen that Palmer and the Romanists differ chiefly in their definitions on the single point of Papal Supremacy.

It is not indeed contended by any that baptism admits a man to a state wherein he will be saved, whether or not he possess faith and repentance. There is a manifest and important difference, however, between that view which contemplates Christ's kingdom as composed of baptized men, some of whom will be saved, and others of whom will be lost, and that which makes a spiritual door of admittance to Christ's church, and baptism a duty incumbent on all men. As we set out with the belief that the Holy Catholic church is composed of all who will be saved, and of none others, it is enough for us to prove that baptism is neither essential to, nor sufficient for, salvation.

A difference of opinion prevails as to what constitutes valid baptism and an authorized ministry. Some affirm that adult believers are alone capable of receiving baptism, others that infants are fit subjects. Some say immersion is the only mode of administration; others contend that pouring and sprinkling are equally effective. Some say none are authorized to administer the rite who have not been regularly ordained by a Bishop of apostolic succession; others that Presbyterian ordination will do; others that a minister chosen and commissioned by any Congregation is competent to act; while others, again, say that any private individual may baptize, provided the words of the Trinitarian formula be used.

It is not needful for our present purpose to discuss

the claims of Episcopal and Presbyterian ordination; neither shall we pause to inquire whether individual self-appointment or Congregational selection give authority to administer a sacrament. We shall not consider the necessity of immersion or the sufficiency of any other mode. We need not settle whether infants can be admitted to the true church, or adults alone. Because, however men may differ upon these points, the advocates of this view all agree that baptism, outward baptism by water, is essential to membership in Christ's Church. And if we can show that *no* rite of baptism is *necessary* to bring a man within the ark of safety, and no rite of baptism *sufficient* for the purpose; that the boundaries of Christ's kingdom are not limited to the baptized, and that baptism does not admit to that kingdom; all these cognate questions of modes, and ministers, and subjects, will likewise be swept away. These questions are important in themselves, and worthy a careful examination, but we need not now trouble ourselves about them.

Is there, then, any authority in the New Testament for saying that the church of Christ is co-extensive with the company of baptized men? Let it be remembered Christ's Church is composed of men actually saved from sin and death, and that, as we proved in our first chapter, it contains all who will be saved. Now, is baptism, even when administered by the most lawful minister, *sufficient* to place a man in a state of safety?

The presumption seems strongly against such a means of bringing men into covenant relations of justification and peace with God, having any place under the Christian dispensation, when we remember that, even in patriarchal times, men were not counted righteous through the instrumentality of outward rites. Circumcision, the external mark of Jewish allegiance, corresponding in many respects to baptism, was not sufficient to save a man, neither was it essential to his salvation. Abel offered acceptable sacrifice to God, Noah built the ark, and Enoch walked with God, before circumcision was established. St. Paul tells us that Abraham was justified, not by circumcision, but by *faith*, and, moreover, that he was justified *before* he was circumcised, thereby proving circumcision neither sufficient for nor essential to salvation, (Rom. iv. 10.) And would it not be strange if, under the more spiritual dispensation of the latter times, an outward rite should be made the door of entrance to Christ's kingdom? If Abraham could not enter the kingdom by such an observance, is it to be supposed a more sensuous system has been established now.

This branch of the argument, however, may be settled in a summary way. No candid person can read the New Testament, and say that outward baptism is sufficient to save a man. The Saviour and his Apostles every where teach, that whosoever believeth not shall be damned. Even if a man had been baptized

in the most regular way, yet, if he had not faith he would be without Christ's kingdom.*

But it may be said, though baptism alone is not sufficient, yet it is *essential* to salvation, and therefore essential to admittance into Christ's Church.

Our Saviour did, indeed, tell his disciples to go teach all nations, baptizing them. This makes it the bounden duty of all who hear the gospel to become baptized; and doubtless unless there be some unavoidable circumstance to prevent, a Christian will gladly make profession of the Saviour in this his appointed way. But does this make baptism essential to church membership? Certainly not, any more than the Lord's Supper is essential. Partaking of the Lord's Supper was commanded by the same Divine Person who instituted baptism. It rests on precisely the same grounds. It is a duty binding upon all Christians. Yet there are many members of the Church, as all agree, who die without partaking. They are Christians in heart, they have been baptized, yet, from circumstances not under their control, they have never tasted the appointed symbols of a Saviour's

* The case of Simon Magus is interesting in this connexion. Simon was baptized by Philip, who was certainly ordained by the Apostles. There can be no doubt then his baptism was regular, yet St. Peter told him he "*had no part nor lot in the matter,*" being still "*in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity,*" (Acts viii. 9, 23.)

love. And are they, therefore, not members of Christ's Church? The supporters of the baptismal theory would not affirm this. And if failure to obey one outward requisition of our Lord does not prevent a man's being in the Church, it remains to be shown from clear scripture, that innocent neglect of another would have such effect. No such clear scripture can be found.

The strongest passage in favour of the view we are combating, is found in the third chapter of St. John's gospel: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Now, here we have a plain declaration, say some, that none can obtain admission to the church unless he be born of water—that is, baptized. But in the same address to Nicodemus, (John iii. 15, 16,) our Saviour expressly declares that whosoever *believeth* shall not perish but have everlasting life. We must either hold, therefore, that vital justifying faith is impossible without baptism, or else we must acknowledge our Saviour did not mean to teach a man could not be saved without baptism. The former will scarcely be maintained; the latter necessarily follows.

What then does the passage mean? My impression is this:—Our Saviour wished to convey to Nicodemus a clear and unmistakable view of the new spiritual birth. But, though a teacher in Israel, he was so ignorant and sensuous in his views, that he was unpre-

pared to receive instruction upon the point. He could not understand this spiritual change. Our Saviour, therefore, makes use of water, in a figure Nicodemus would be likely to understand. The latter was accustomed to use water in the purifyings required by the Jewish law. Our Saviour tells him he must not be purified by water *only*, but by water and the Spirit. The purport of the sentence seems not to teach the importance of using water, but rather its insufficiency. Nicodemus had been impressed with the divine authority of our Lord, and wished further instruction with regard to the nature of his kingdom. Our Saviour began by telling him that except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus was lost in amazement, and expressed his surprise. Our Saviour saw his heart, and read the exact difficulty in his case, and replied precisely to the point. He saw Nicodemus held the ordinary Jewish view concerning the kingdom of heaven, and that he regarded it as a mere temporal dominion. We are left to infer this from our Lord's answer. The words of Nicodemus were brief, and do not place us in possession of his views and feelings. He had seen the disciples baptizing men with water, and perhaps thought it only necessary for him to be baptized, in order to become a Christian. Our Saviour tells him this outward rite is insufficient; that a man must be born, not of water only, but of the Spirit; that he must be renewed in the spirit of his mind, cleansed in heart, just as the

body is cleansed by water; that he must have the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, (Titus iii. 5,) before he could enter the kingdom of God.

It seems enough for many to prove a reference in this passage to Christian baptism. But such reference being established, it does not at all follow that baptism is necessary to admission into the kingdom of God; because the object of our Saviour plainly was, to declare the necessity of a spiritual birth, *even when water baptism had been used*. Corresponding with this passage is Ephes. v. 26, where St. Paul says the church is cleansed "*with the washing of water by the Word;*" and also (1 Pet. iii. 21,) where it is said, "The like figure whereunto, even baptism doth now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,)" &c.

Thus no authority can be found in the discourse of our Lord, (John iii.) to sanction the necessity of baptism for admission to Christ's Church.

Much stress is laid upon the commission of Christ to his apostles: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned. (Matt. xxviii. 19; Mark xvi. 16.)

It is said salvation is only promised here to those who are baptized—but it is not *denied* to those unbap-

tized. On the contrary, the omission of any statement in regard of unbaptized persons in the latter clause, after the mention of them in the first, implies that disbelief* and want of baptism do not always go together, and that damnation does not always attend a want of baptism. In like manner St. Peter said, "Repent, and be baptized for the remission of sins;" but he did not say men would perish for innocent failure of baptism, even though they repented, (Acts ii. 38.)

Palmer cites two other texts in support of his theory.† "The Evangelist had declared 'they that gladly received the word were baptized, and the same day were added about three thousand souls,' subjoining that 'the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved,' thereby instructing us that the way in which men were added to the church was by baptism."

Here is an example of erroneous doctrine founded upon a want of discrimination among the senses in which the word church is used. Palmer speaks as if the Universal Church were here intended, whereas it is plain the church at Jerusalem was meant.‡

* "Disbelieve" is a more correct translation than "believe not."

† Palmer, Vol. I., p. 376.

‡ To be satisfied of this let any one read the context, forgetting for a time that any other interpretation has been given the passage. The Church spoken of is obviously composed of

No one doubts that baptism is the only regular mode of declaring a public adoption of Christianity, and uniting with an external society of Christians. But many make that outward declaration, and form that external union, who are far from the true kingdom of Jesus.

Palmer continues—"The apostle had said, 'As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ—ye are all one in Christ Jesus;'* intimating that in baptism they were engrafted into Christ's body, the Church."

This proof text is clearly explained by the same apostle, "For by *one Spirit*," he says, "we are all baptized into one body," (1 Cor. xii. 13.)

The inference from these and from all similar passages is, that true Christians will, as a matter of course, be baptized when they can, but no passage can be found, teaching directly or indirectly that those alone are members of Christ's church who have been baptized.

Moreover, there are passages where Christ's church and its members are spoken of in such a way as to make it impossible baptism should be essential to admission into the fold. But as these will be cited

those who "were together," (v. 44,) and who "continued daily with one accord in the temple," (v. 46.)

* Gal. iii. 27.

under another head, it is needless to introduce them here.

The very fact that no text in the New Testament gives countenance to the view is enough to condemn it. It finds no support in the Bible. It is foreign from the spirit of Christianity. It was conceived by those who brought legal and ceremonial views to the study of our Saviour's doctrines, and who, being unable to receive the simplicity of the Spirit, remained hampered by the oldness of the letter. It must be rejected in common with that other theory, which requires universal adherence to the Roman Pontiff. Though differing in some respects, they are both hostile to the true Gospel of our Lord, whose dominion has no visible human Head, and whose kingdom cannot be accurately marked by the prevalence of any outward Rite.

CHAPTER III.

KINGDOM OF THE SAVED.

OFTEN in looking eagerly toward a distant object, we fail to see it, because of some intervening object. A natural remedy is to change our stand point.

Looking at the Kingdom of Christ continually from the *ecclesiastical* stand point, and contemplating it only through the medium of expressions belonging to the church, we may have acquired some knowledge of the outer walls and battlements of Zion, but are not yet able to tell the number of her palaces, the character of her inhabitants, or the nature of her interior life.

Let us drop, for a time, all terms peculiar to the Christian Church, considered as an outward economy, and view Christianity as a system established for man's Salvation.

If we cast our eyes around upon the world we cannot fail to notice the great diversity of circumstances in which mankind are placed with regard to knowledge and morality, as well as with reference to the civil and religious institutions under which they live. In view of these circumstances we are accustomed to

classify the human race as civilized or uncivilized, enlightened or ignorant, virtuous or vicious; and we likewise distinguish their institutions as beneficial or injurious, despotic or free. Such discriminations all thinking men make.

The Christian is taught a more perfect classification; since it is at the same time more accurate and more comprehensive. He is told that notwithstanding this great variety of condition, every individual of the human race may be brought within one or the other of two great divisions; that in addition to the numerous social and political relations of life, there is a higher relation, compared with which, in point of importance, all others dwindle into insignificance, and that in this relation there are but two kingdoms.

These kingdoms differ not only as to the nature of their regulations, but as to the character of the governors and governed, their present condition and future destiny. The Lord of the one sovereignty is the "anointed of God," "who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person," hath received from the Father a kingly authority over "things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth," and hath been exalted above all "principalities and powers, and might and dominion." The monarch of the other once faithfully served the Lord of all, and stood high in his favour; but, led away by mad ambition, he rebelled, and aided by certain kindred spirits, rallying to his standard, he succeeded in

establishing a kingdom of his own. These sovereigns are assisted in the administration of their respective governments by subordinate beings, some visible and others invisible.

Concerning the schemes of these governments it is not our present purpose to remark, and in seeking for a comparison, we find nothing, within the range of human knowledge, furnishing a stronger contrast than the schemes themselves. Suffice it to say, then, they differ as widely as Heaven from Hell. The grand aim of the one is to confer on its subjects all the happiness of which they are susceptible. The fundamental object of the other is to lead its followers to everlasting destruction.

Such being the nature of these two kingdoms, it becomes to the philosopher a subject of curious investigation, and to the religious inquirer a matter of vital importance, to determine where the territories of the one terminate, and those of the other begin. This we shall now attempt to do.

In this discussion we take for granted the universal depravity of mankind through the sin of Adam, and the universal redemption of mankind through the atonement of Christ. We wish to discover why some sons of Adam should be heirs of eternal life, while so many more, for whom Christ died, should be children of wrath.

Before consulting that oracle from whose decisions there lies no appeal, let us see if any information may

be gleaned from the reason of the thing and the nature of the case.

I. It is related that upon a certain occasion the King of heaven and the Prince of Darkness met on the summit of a lofty mountain, from which were visible "the kingdoms of the world and all the glory of them." Satan knowing that something must speedily be done, or his chance would be gone forever, resorted to an expedient, specious as it was impious. Pointing to the goodly prospect, as it lay before them, he said, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me."

Now suppose, instead of returning a direct answer to this insidious offer, the King of Glory had assumed the prerogatives of his exalted station, and willing to show the adversary how completely his authority was independent of foreign control, had proclaimed himself the rightful Lord of heaven and earth; suppose from that mountain had gone forth tidings of mercy to a ruined world in the simple language—"Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price,"—what response would the message have found in the hearts of men?

We pretend to no supernatural power enabling us to answer this question, but there are certain broad principles of humanity, universal as the race itself, and from which we may reason with scarcely less

confidence, than from the operation of material laws. Show us the circumstances in which a human soul is placed, and we will venture to name some of the thoughts and emotions of that soul. We feel warranted in affirming, then, that in the heart of every human being, to whose ears those words should come, and who was not prevented by circumstances from comprehending their import; whether such individual were a Jew, well read in Scripture, a philosopher, who, by the light of nature, had long sought means of being reconciled to his offended God, or a barbarian, sunk in a condition too brutal for speculation, yet not so entirely lost to conscience as to be reckless of the future; whatever may have been the condition, and however numerous and conflicting may have been the emotions of the hearers, there would spring up in every heart one of two feelings—either trust or distrust. Thus would the whole species, setting aside those incapable of piety or impiety, be arranged in two divisions—Believers and Disbelievers.

Time would fail us, in tracing out as they deserve, these two principles of belief and disbelief, and in showing how from the one spring all those thoughts, feelings and actions, which constitute the loyal subject, while the other proves tantamount to a willing rejection of the proffered amnesty and an adherence to the service of Satan. Such a process could not, we think, fail, to return, as an answer to the question, what the grand diverging point may be, from which

go out all differences in the present condition and future prospects of the two great Kingdoms of Light and Darkness, that some believe, while others believe not.

II. Let us now apply this ground of classification, which seems more than hinted at in the nature of things, to the test of Scripture.

The term employed by the sacred writers, to denote members of the kingdom of heaven upon earth, and candidates for the more glorious kingdom above, is the justified or just.

By this expression they do not mean to teach that any descendant of Adam can, in the strict and juridical sense, be *just* in the sight of God. On the contrary, they maintain, throughout the inspired volume, that none are righteous, that all are gone out of the way, and that the wrath of God is abiding upon all who are dependent on their own merits.* They only intend to declare that God, in view of the all-sufficient atonement of the God-man Christ Jesus, has been pleased "to blot out their iniquities from the book of his remembrance," and to *treat* them as if, in fact, *just*.

But since, as before remarked, this atonement is universal, including every individual of the human race, we seek to learn, from the same infallible source, the mark, separating real partakers of so inestimable

* Romans, i. ii. and iii.

a benefit, from others, who at first sight seem in like favourable condition, yet for whom "Christ died in vain." What is the exact difference, leaving all non-essentials out of view, between men living under God's favour, in a state of justification, and those who are children of wrath?

The blessed Jesus has himself spoken clearly upon the point. He does not direct us to union with any society, to the observance of any rites, or submission to any human government or laws. He does not promise acceptance with God, and salvation in return for good works. Faith in him; a trust for time and eternity in his merits; a filial trust, manifesting itself in love to God, and in efforts to please him; this is the condition, and the sole condition, of divine favour taught by the Saviour. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him," (John iii. 16-36.)

"Then said they unto him, What shall we do that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent, and this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day," (John vi. 28, 29-40.)

"If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins," (John viii. 24.)

"I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die," (John xi. 26.)

The teaching of the apostles coincides with the instructions of the Redeemer. St. Paul in his address at Antioch, says, "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him, all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses," (Acts xiii. 38, 39.) To the trembling jailer, asking the way of salvation, he says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," (Acts xvi. 31.)

There is not a single epistle of St. Paul in which the distinguishing characteristic of a real disciple is not set forth. To the Romans he writes, "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," (Rom. v. 1.) To the Corinthians, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus; who, of God, is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," (1 Cor. i. 30.) "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ," (1 Cor. iii. 11.) To the Galatians, "For ye are the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus," (Gal. iii. 26.) To the Ephesians, "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of

yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast," (Eph. ii. 5.) To the Philip-pians, after speaking of his compliance with the ceremonial law, as a Jew, he adds, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ, that I might be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith," (Phil. iii. 7.) To the same effect he speaks in other epistles, and so do the other apostles.

But we need not quote particular passages, though this might be done to great extent. The testimony of Christ and his apostles is most clear to the fact, that the Son of Man came into the world that whosoever believeth on him, might thereby become his servant, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, while the converse is made equally plain, that whosoever *believeth not* shall be damned.

Indeed, if we strike from the gospels and epistles the doctrine of justification by faith only, we make the New Testament a mass of unconnected dogmas and incidents, and the lives of our Saviour and his disciples a series of unmeaning tragedies. To use the language of St. Paul, "If righteousness come by the law then Christ is dead in vain."

Thus reason and revelation return a like answer to one seeking the distinguishing mark between the kingdom of the saved and the dominion of Satan. Both point to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. The faith that justifies is no cold assent of the reason to the truths of Christianity. It is a living active principle; though entirely separated from all other acts, so far as acceptance and divine favour are concerned, yet from its nature it must give evidence of existence and genuineness by conformity to God's law. "But wilt thou know, O vain man," says the Apostle James, "that faith without works is dead?" (James ii. 20.)

James contemplates the same act *evidentially* which Paul regarded *juridically*. If any man claims acceptance with God, on ground of justice, based upon good works, he is told those works are sinful and insufficient. But if he seeks to be justified by a barren faith, he is taught that true belief ever manifests itself in holiness, and that without holiness no man can see God, (Heb. xii. 14.)

The New Testament contains declarations in respect of those living in a state of safety, which cannot be reconciled with the clearly revealed doctrine of justification by faith alone, except on supposition that genuine belief will assuredly change the heart and life. Christians are all said to be regenerated or converted through the inward working of faith, and this entire transformation of character and life are attributed to the Holy Ghost.

"As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God," (Rom. viii. 14.) "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of

the Spirit is spirit," (John iii. 6.) "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God," (Rom. ii. 28.) "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new," (2 Cor. v. 17.) "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts," (Gal. v. 24.) "Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost," (Titus iii. 5.)

From all this it must appear, that those who believe on Jesus Christ, with a faith manifesting itself in newness of life, are living in a state of safety, while those who believe not are under condemnation.

IV. An immediate and important inference may be drawn, from the foregoing positions, as to the nature and extent of Christ's Church. Things which are equal to the same thing are equal to each other. If, as we proved in our first chapter, the Church of Christ is composed of all saved men, and if believers, and believers only are saved, it follows that believers are members of that church, and that the church is com-

posed of believers. Thus the limits of the church and the realms of faith are co-extensive.*

The argument might here be left, and a judgment claimed in favour of the conclusion reached, but we are willing to go further, and show that the manner in which the church is spoken of in the New Testament plainly teaches it to be composed of believing, regenerate men, and of them alone.

V. Every thing said in the New Testament of the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of Heaven,† agrees with that view which supposes the church composed of men, who, being justified by faith, are regenerate through the Holy Ghost. An entrance into this kingdom is considered the paramount business of life. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteous-

* In affirming that the limits of the church and the realms of faith are co-extensive, no opinion is designed with regard to infants, prior to the age of moral accountability, or heathen adults deprived of light sufficient for faith. The Gospel requisition of faith, in order to salvation, applies only to such as are capable of faith. The heathen will be judged by a merciful God; and infants, dying in infancy, will appear before that compassionate Saviour, who, while on earth, took them in his arms and blessed them. The woes denounced against disbelief were never intended for "those who *cannot* believe."

† Always denoting the Church, either in its militant or triumphant state, and used indiscriminately, because an entrance into one gives sure title of admittance to the other.

ness, and all these things shall be added unto you," (Matt. vi. 33.) Into this kingdom it is difficult to enter; it suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force, (Matt. xi. 12.) The rich, and those that trust in riches, enter with difficulty, if at all, (Mark x. 24: Matt. xix. 24.) Why any violence or difficulty, if entrance was by baptism? Why could not the rich enter if baptism was the door?

When a certain scribe gave clear expression to the great truth, that supreme love to God, and a corresponding love to our neighbour, is superior to whole burnt offerings and sacrifices; the Saviour assured him he was "not far from the kingdom of God," (Matt. xii. 34.) He blessed the poor in spirit, a title which well describes the state of humble believers, and declared that theirs was the kingdom of Heaven, (Matt. v. 3.) He said the kingdom of God cometh not with observation, (Luke xvii. 20.) How well this agrees with the secret, silent progress of a kingdom of faith, the extent of which cannot be accurately observed by human eyes, and which often holds full sway in the heart of an obscure disciple, without the knowledge of his worldly cotemporaries. In reply to Pilate, who asked concerning his kingdom, "Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king; to this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth; every one that is of the truth heareth my voice," (John xviii. 37.) While affirming himself a king, he maintains that his do-

minion differs widely from the world's sovereignties, that he is a king of *truth*, and that the loyal homage of his subjects, in fact the distinguishing mark of his people, is the *hearing* of his voice. To hear his voice, in the sense here intended, is to regard his words, to *trust* them and *obey* them. It is thus the truth emancipates men from the yoke of Satan, and procures for them an admittance to the church of God. "Then said Jesus to the Jews, which *believed* on him, If ye continue in my word, then shall ye be my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Our Saviour lays down clearly the terms of admission to his kingdom. He declares that none can enter who have not been converted and made like little children: "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven," (Matt. xviii. 3.)

To the Pharisees, who inquired when the kingdom of God should come, he answered, "The kingdom of God cometh not with outward observation, neither shall they say, Lo here, or lo there, for behold the kingdom of God is within you."* "The kingdom of God is within you," must either mean that its reign is internal in the hearts of men, or else that it was *among* them even then. If the former, as some hold, it is a

* εἰς τοὺς ὑμῶν. Luke xviii. 21.

powerful proof text in favour of our theory of the Christian Church. If the latter, as others contend, it shows that Christ's kingdom was already established at a time when Christian baptism had not been instituted,* and the Lord's Supper had never been celebrated, when there was no outward rite or ceremony whatever, pertaining to the Christian Church.

The reply of our Saviour to Nicodemus is a remarkably clear proof text upon the point: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," (John iii.) It was shown in chapter second, that this new birth is not mere baptism by water. Christ himself says as much: "Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God; that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit;" and then to separate this regeneration from every

* For a powerful argument in support of the view that Christian baptism was not practised during our Saviour's life, vide Robert Hall on Terms of Communion. The baptism performed by our Lord's disciples, before his death, was John's baptism. To a select few the Messiah had made himself known, and they, if believers, were members of his kingdom. Professing allegiance, by personal adherence, they needed no formal rite of initiation. There is, accordingly, no reason to believe the original disciples were ever baptized in the name of Jesus. Disciples of John, who embraced Christianity on and after the day of Pentecost, were baptized anew.

thing outward and material, he adds: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

Here we have a plain declaration that the only mode of entrance into Christ's church is by an inward, spiritual change, such as makes man a new creature.

St. Paul carefully excludes all notion that the kingdom of Christ has its seat in outward words, or rites, or forms. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God and approved of men." (Rom. xiv. 17, 18.) "For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God," (1 Cor. iv. 20—vi. 9, 10—11.)

In these verses the unregenerate are plainly excluded. Justification in the name of the Lord Jesus and sanctification by the Spirit of God are set forth as the means by which men are delivered from sin and engrafted into the kingdom of God.

The process by which men are made members of Christ's *Household*, which is another name for his

church, is beautifully described in Ephes. ii. It is there spoken of as a spiritual work, wrought in the human soul by the power of the Holy Ghost; "Wherefore remember, that ye, being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called circumcision in the flesh, made by hands, that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world; but now, in Christ Jesus, ye who some time were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." "For through him we both have access by *one Spirit* unto the Father. Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the *household of God*, and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone, in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord, in whom ye also are builded together for an *habitation of God through the Spirit*."

In chapter fifth of the same epistle, the church of Christ is expressly described under figure of the marriage relation, as composed of inwardly and vitally renewed men, washed in the laver of true regeneration, through the power of Christ's atonement. "Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as unto the Lord: for the husband is head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church, and he is the

Saviour of the body.” “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might *sanctify* and *cleanse* it, with the washing of water by the *word*, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.”

Members of Christ's church are here spoken of, not as outwardly professing godliness in baptism, or by connexion with the most apostolic visible fold, but as inwardly renewed, cleansed not by water merely, but by the water of the word, which is the agent employed by the Spirit in converting human souls.

In 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17, St. Paul styles Christians the *Temple of God*; another name for Christ's church. “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the *Spirit of God* dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.”

In Hebrews xii. we have a glowing allusion to the Universal Church: “For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words”—“But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits

of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, which speaketh better things than that of Abel."

The apostle, animated by the sublime and precious truths of redeeming love, grasps at one view the church on earth and in heaven; as he styles it, "the general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven." The church, according to this passage, is composed of the sons of God, born again by the power of God's Spirit, and so highly honoured and blessed that they have all the privileges of *first born sons*.

I shall cite but one other passage,* for, though the word church is used in a limited sense frequently in the New Testament, there are a few cases where it is applied to the universal kingdom of Christ.

In Matt. xvi., in the verse claimed by Romanists to establish St. Peter's supremacy, our Saviour says, "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Now every thoughtful reader of the Bible must own, that the only church against which the gates of hell do not prevail is that composed of true Christians. Outward and visible members of all churches are too often led cap-

* For a thorough and learned exposition of the Scripture usage of ἐκκλησία, vide Turretin, Vol. iii. That author's entire treatise on the church well deserves a careful study. Also consult Dr. Stone's excellent work on the Universal Church.

tive by Satan, at his will, and mere outward membership secures none, in the last great day, from the assaults of hell; Christ's regenerate sons alone are safe; for them he conquered death and hell, and they are true members of his church.

Such is the testimony of Scripture with regard to the nature and extent of the Holy Catholic Church. It consists of no adherence to, or observance of, outward rites and ceremonies. It is a company renewed in the spirit of their minds, converted, sanctified, brought from darkness into marvellous light. It is the company of Abraham's spiritual posterity, who, being partakers of his faith, are Israelites indeed. It is the whole number described by St. Paul, as led by the Spirit, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, the simple-minded, earnest-hearted children of God.

If you would find members of this church, look through the world. Open unprejudiced eyes upon your fellow men. Be not dazzled by the assumption of spiritual arrogance, neither misled by the obscurity of humble faith. Christ's kingdom *came* not with observation. Its lines of demarkation cannot *now* be traced by any prevalence of ritual pomp or visible display. Its foundation is truth; its reign is moral and spiritual. Rooted and grounded in the heart, it becomes manifest in holy living.

Wherever you find a man of changed and sanctified heart; whose affections are bound to the cross of Jesus; whose life is daily prayer, and love and good

works; whether his lot be cast in a Christian community, or far from the visible forms of our religion; whether he be called or not by the name of any ecclesiastical body; whether he submit to Rome, or Episcopacy or Parity; whether his infant brow was sprinkled with holy water, or his adult confession made by literal burial in the font of baptism, you should recognise him as a member of God's catholic church, and greet him as a brother in Christ.

Members of the Catholic fold have no mark by which they can assuredly be recognised in the world, and distinguished from false pretenders, but to the vision of him who discerneth in secret, they are all known; a seal of promise stamped upon their hearts proves their heavenly birth. Royal insignia of peace and joy and love bespeak them kings and priests to God forever. A sympathetic link unites them with angelic hosts. The Holy Ghost, shed abroad in their hearts, makes them realize that they have indeed come to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and that their place is secured in the general assembly and church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven.

How contemptible and valueless, compared with this church membership, is that which depends on the favour of a human Pope, or which must be searched for in the register of Baptism.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHURCH MAKES HERSELF VISIBLE.

THE conclusion to which our inquiry thus far leads us, is, that Christ's Church is composed of men, trusting in the atonement for salvation, and living, by faith, a new life of holiness.

I. The question may be asked whether this Church is visible or invisible? I answer, it is both visible and invisible.* It has an inward secret life, and an outward manifest body. It is invisible in its spiritual faith and love; it is visible in kind offices to man, and holy deeds on God's behalf. Its boundary lines, written on fleshly tables of the heart, cannot be seen, but it has land marks, described by Scripture, which become known of all men.

Every child of God, on becoming a member of Christ's Church, is bound by sonship to God, out of

* For the distinction intended by the terms visible and invisible Church, the author feels profound respect; but he does not use them, deeming it more closely accordant with scripture, to speak of the Church as one; having a secret life and a visible aspect.

gratitude to the Lamb who bought him, to dedicate all his powers and faculties to Jehovah's service. The word of God becomes his rule of life. He renounces the walks and ways of sin and becomes holy, in all manner of Godliness. He labours to extend to his fellow men that gospel which has proved such a blessing in his case. He does good to all—loving his neighbour as himself; he bears his burdens, sympathizes with his wants, and relieves his necessities. He is the first to knock at the door of an afflicted house. He binds up the broken heart, with kind words, and pours the oil of comfort into the troubled soul. He is not easily provoked. He puts up with insults and reproaches for Christ's sake. He does not revenge himself, except by blessing those who curse, and praying for those who spitefully use him.

In the mental agonies and denials of self these duties cost him, he is secret, and the Church of which he is a member is invisible, but in the fruits of his heartfelt labours, in his beneficence and kindness, the Church becomes visible; a light set in a prominent place, to show forth God's glory; a city set upon a hill, which cannot be hid.

II. The Church of God is likewise made visible, in the ministry appointed by Christ, to preach his gospel.* It was stated, in our first chapter, that the

* An important difference exists between the two classes into

word *ἐκκλησία* was applied in the Old Testament to a company gathered together by heralds commissioned by superior authority. The literal meaning of the word is realized in the method employed by Christ for congregating his spiritual Zion. Men do not voluntarily seek Christ, but he seeks them. They are by nature so hostile to him, so averse from any thing like reconciliation with him, if left to themselves, they would never come to him that they might have life. The holy deeds of Jesus, and his suffering unto death, would all be in vain, if the record were suffered

which the Church's visible notes may be divided. Some are moral and others positive. That is, some spring naturally from the regenerate heart, as gratitude to God, manifesting itself in an effort to please him; and love to man, exhibiting itself in benevolent acts. These are *always* seen, when time is given. The inward, renewed principle, *will* make itself visible in good works.

But in regard of positive duties, which arise only when the command is given, and which grow mainly out of the command, it cannot be affirmed they will always attend true church membership; because there are cases where their observance is impossible. And yet the spiritual new birth may be as genuine, and the church membership as real as if every requisition had been fulfilled.

Men, too, may be educated with a veil upon their minds, so far as certain positive duties are concerned, and who become true believers and church members, though neglecting the sacraments of our Lord. While regretting their views, we should

to lie unnoticed, or if men were left to seek out that record for themselves. A few inquiring and honest minds might search for the truth, but the masses would remain shrouded in ignorance, and groaning beneath the yoke of sin.

Our Saviour, therefore, provided for the perpetual dissemination of his truth. He instituted an order of men, to be continued forever, while the world should stand; commissioned by himself; whose great and sole business should be to proclaim the tidings of salvation; who should penetrate the darkest recesses of the world, and hold up the lamp of life; who should stand up wherever two or three could be gathered together, and expound to them the Testament of love, who should follow after the wandering and lost children of the Most High, and bring them back to their Father's abode: who should meet men at every turn, so as to leave them without excuse, and sound in their ears the words of divine reason and expostulation;

not deny them a place in Christ's kingdom. Many such give proof of citizenship in the heavenly Jerusalem, clear and un-mistakeable. Who would not gladly own himself in the same Ark of Safety with John Joseph Gurney?

The first class of visible notes are essential to the very being of the Church. The second class are essential to the permanence and usefulness of the church. All attempts to perpetuate Christianity, without the sacraments, public worship, and external frame work of rulers and canons, have signally failed.

who should whisper in the hearing of the misguided and wayward, "Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; why will ye die?" in a word, who should perform, upon a larger scale, for the whole world, what was done, in a limited degree for Palestine, when the heralds of Israel sounded their trumpets and summoned God's chosen people to duty.

This ministry is, I say, of perpetual appointment. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," (Mark xvi. 15.) "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," (Matt. xxviii. 20.) These passages make plain our Lord's design, that there should always be men to proclaim, as his ambassadors, the terms of reconciliation with God.

Accordingly, in all ages, there have been many, who declared themselves moved by the Holy Ghost, called of God as Aaron was, to undertake this high and responsible office.* These are seen every where, labouring with more or less zeal and success, calling men out of darkness into light, and adding to the Church such as should be saved.

The ministry, then, is a standing and perpetual outward and visible attribute of the Holy Catholic Church.

* The obligation of the apostolic system, with regard to ordination, the sacraments, &c., will be discussed in the latter part of this chapter.

III. Christ's Church is likewise made visible by her sacraments. The wise founder of our religion was not unmindful of man's twofold, corporeal and spiritual nature, and he adapted his system to man's wants. He gave outward and visible signs, easily understood by all, which might be tangible notes of the progress of his kingdom;* tokens of love and means of grace to those who should rightly use them, and bonds of external union among professing disciples—"Go ye, therefore," he says, "and teach all nations, baptizing them." (Matt. xxviii. 19.) Thus empowered, his apostles and ministers, in all times, have admitted men by application of water, in the name of the Trinity, to the external Christian fold. "Take, eat, this is my body," said the same divine personage, "after he had broken bread and blessed it." "And he took the cup, and gave it to them and gave thanks, saying Drink ye *all* of it, for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for the remission of sins." (Matt. xxvi. 26, 27, 28.)

The apostles, who were inspired men, understood these precepts to be of permanent obligation. It was the custom, therefore, of Christians in their day, not only to be baptized, but to eat and drink the symbols of redeeming love. That custom has never ceased. It is now regarded as a divine injunction, binding

* Not *precise* indices, yet valuable evidences of progress.

upon the Church in all ages. Those who rightly partake, find themselves so strengthened and comforted by the sacraments, they would not willingly forego the privilege.

IV. Public worship is a standing institution of the Christian church. Our Saviour saw that if Christians were left to struggle alone, they would oftentimes grow careless and lukewarm. He therefore instructed the apostles, after baptizing, to congregate them, from time to time, for purposes of public worship, that the flame of love might be kept alive and zeal increased, (Matt. xxviii. 20; John xxi. 15, 17.) The apostles carefully observed this injunction, warning members "not to forsake the assembling of themselves together as the manner of some was." This custom has been regularly adhered to up to our day. The Lord's day, supplanting the old Jewish Sabbath, is honoured by all true followers of Jesus, in an attendance upon the services of the sanctuary.

V. The Holy Catholic Church is likewise visible in those vast schemes, which exist in the world for the extension of truth; as Bible Societies, Missionary Societies and Tract Societies; in many humane institutions, as Asylums and Hospitals; also, in the liberalized and enlightened forms of civil government, in the prevalence of general information and comfort, in the strength and purity of literature, obtaining in Christian countries.

Darkness and despotism and degradation, may,

indeed, prevail, where the outer moats and battlements of Christianity are seen ; but examining carefully, you will find these seeming Christian fortresses manned and defended by Satan's legions.

VI. For a visible society, government is needed, or else all will be confusion. The apostles provided against this. They appointed rulers, and commanded Christians to submit to those over them in the Lord, (Acts xiv. 23 ; Tit. i. 5 ; 1 Cor. xvi. 16 ; Heb. xiii. 17.) The precepts enjoining good order and submission have never been repealed. They stand, side by side, in the apostolic letters, with the doctrines of holiness and faith.

Government, therefore, is enacted, by reason and law, a perpetual attribute of the Christian Church.

VII. It may be asked what relation baptized men, when irreligious, bear to the Holy Catholic Church ? Are they, in any sense, members ?

In name, in profession, in appearance, they are ; but in *reality* they are no members at all, any more than the thief who comes unbidden to a house and steals the children's bread and garments is a member of the family.*

* Baptized infants are not to be confounded with ungodly professors. By a divine command the seal of promise and sign of regeneration is placed upon their brows. In the language of hope they are styled members of Christ's Church. The dawn of conscience proves that appellation well founded, or re-

There are but two states; and in one or the other of these a man must be living. He must either be a child of light, or a child of darkness; a son of God, or a son of Belial; a true member of Christ, or no member at all. The body of Christ, which is his Church, has many members; varying, like those of the human body, in form and office. But all these are animated by one in-dwelling, life-giving, all-pervading, and all-controlling spirit, (1 Cor. xii. 13.) This control of the Spirit is the test of sonship and membership of Christ. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his," (Rom. viii. 9.) The in-dwelling Spirit is the only source of life, and without it there is death. A limb of the body, not receiving supplies from the heart, ceases to be any part of the body, and becomes mere inert matter. In like manner, a nominal Christian, not joined by spiritual arteries to the Spirit of Christ, is dead while he liveth.

The unconverted professor is counted among God's people in human registers, because there is no

veals them children of wrath. Dying before the age of discretion, reason and our knowledge of Christ's benevolence leave no apprehensions for their safety.

Beyond this, neither scripture nor sound philosophy conduct us. Those who attempt to define more accurately the position and moral state of infants become involved in endless controversies foreign from the scheme of Christianity.

power in man to search the spirit; but, in truth, he is the servant of sin and Satan, and no servant of Christ or member of his Church. "Non potest Christus habere membra damnata," is the fearful language of Augustine. What a thrill of horror should such words send to the soul of every disciple of our Lord, who is ignorant of the inward life and power of godliness.*

* Upon this point, Rev. Dr. May speaks clearly and well, in a sermon preached at the Virginia convention of 1847. "It is to be understood that the man who is carnally minded or worldly in spirit, is not to look back to his baptism as proof of his being in the kingdom of God. The only proof is the new birth of the soul by the power of the Holy Ghost, that new birth itself to be proved by a new spirit and a new life, meek and holy and heavenly." "Baptism and membership in the Church stand in their proper relations to our life in Christ when they are put in reference to the New Testament, just where St. Paul puts descent from Abraham, and circumcision, in reference to the Old. *He is not a member* of the church, who is one outwardly, neither is that regeneration which is outward by water, but he is a member of the church who is one inwardly, and regeneration is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God."

Tournely, the Romish divine, seems not far from the truth, when he says "Solos electos ac justos ad nobiliorem ecclesiæ partem, quæ *animæ* ipsius dicitur et in virtutibus consistit, reprobos vero et malos ad illius duntaxat *corpus*, hoc est externam fidei professionem ac corundem sacramentorum participationem pertinere." We would not, of course, adopt his language precisely.

But it is said Christ's church is often spoken of as containing unworthy members; as, in the parable of a field, containing tares and wheat; in that of a net, containing good and bad fish; in that of the wedding guest, &c.

These parables, however, do not teach that wicked men belong to Christ's church, but only, that they are mingled with the members, as tares with wheat. Though apparently in the church, they are not of it, any more than Christians dwelling bodily in the world are of the world, (John xvii. 14; 1 John iii. 13.) Even in their literal and strict interpretation they convey no such meaning. It seems surprising the parable of good and bad seed should ever have been so construed, when our Saviour carefully explained that the field containing a mixed product, was not the church, but the world, (Matt. xiii. 38.) The kingdom of heaven, in its likeness to a net, must be acknowledged to gather both the righteous and the wicked, who will only be separated in the end of the world. But this does not prove the kingdom to contain unworthy *members*. The intruders are unworthy *men*, but they have no title to citizenship, because they are aliens and strangers, traitors at heart and rebels in practice. The other parables are no more to the purpose. No one of them, neither all of them combined, furnish evidence that the kingdom of God has within its borders *members*, who have not been born again, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Still, it is urged St. Paul addresses bodies of men as churches, which contained grossly wicked persons; as, for example, the church at Corinth, within whose borders appear to have been some most unworthy professors.

It should be remembered, however, that the church at Corinth was not the Holy Catholic church; neither would it be strictly correct to say it was a *part* of the universal church.* Scripture certainly authorizes us to call visible companies of professing Christians churches, even when they may be supposed to contain wicked men. But Scripture no where teaches that these wicked men are members of the great

* Much confusion and many false notions arise from considering the church general as a *combination* of smaller organizations, viz:—of national, provincial and congregational churches, and, on the other hand, from viewing these lesser organizations as parts of the larger incorporated society. Men are taught to believe their admission into the Catholic Church ushers them into the national, and that membership in the national gives membership in the universal. Whereas the Catholic Church is not composed of men admitted by human ministers through outward sacraments or rites, but of such as God, by his word and Spirit, has inwardly moved to seek his face with penitence and faith. It is not a combination of properly organized societies, but an aggregation of *individual* men, united immediately to Christ, the head, and thus forming his mystical body. They may or may not be members of an outward Christian society.

church of Christ. The apostle Paul nowhere tells these godless men they are members. In the language of courtesy, charity and hope, he writes to the churches as if all in them were real members. But he likewise addresses them all as *saints* and *elect*, (1 Cor. i. 2.) The same argument which proves by St. Paul that the unconverted are members of Christ's church, would prove them saints and elect of God.* But no such inference can be drawn. In writing to bodies of men, it is necessary to style them by some name, expressive of their ostensible character. It does not at all follow that each individual really bears that character.

VIII. The question has also been much agitated, in view of the fact that sacraments, a ministry, public worship and government are commanded and of perpetual obligation, whether that form of church government and that arrangement of the ministry, which were instituted by the apostles is binding upon the church in all times. To answer this question, so far as practical purposes are concerned, is not difficult. If the apostles were commissioned to establish Christ's kingdom in the world; if full powers were given

* If it be said, in answer, that, *αγιος* and *εκλεκτος* have an outward as well as an inward signification, and that the ungodly might be saints and elect externally; we are free to acknowledge they may be church members, in the same way, that is, as we said at the beginning, in *name*, in *profession* and *appearance*.

them, and the Holy Ghost guided them in their acts, as well as in their words, it will require little argument to show that a Christian, walking in the meekness of wisdom, inculcated by the gospel, should look with special reverence upon those external institutions they set up. And without examining whether liberty had been left him to act otherwise, he should feel constrained, from respect to that Divine Spirit which enlightened the apostles, to adhere to the order and arrangement of the ministry, and the form of government used by them, unless some change can be made clear in the world's condition, rendering the primitive system unsuitable. If such change could be made apparent, then, indeed, nothing short of an express declaration, on the part of the apostles, that the system was perpetual, would make their regimen binding on us. Such declaration is not, we believe, claimed by any. The obligatory power of the apostolic system, therefore, must be derived from the fact that they were supernaturally aided in important public works.

That fact is manifest to every intelligent reader of the Acts of the Apostles. At every important step they prayed for divine instruction, and their determinations were attributed to the Holy Ghost, (Acts xiii 3, 4; xv. 28, 29.) And if they sought this heavenly light, when about to take a missionary tour, or to settle a question of meats and drinks, how much rather in regard of so important a concern as the establishment of a church government and ministry.

It seems highly probable that during the forty days immediately preceding our Saviour's ascension, when he communed with them "of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God," (Acts i. 3,) he gave intimations of his will in this respect. And the fact that so infrequent mention is made of the form of church government, and of the ministerial system, in the Acts of the Apostles, which has been interpreted by some* as a Divine lesson, by *omission*, that no such form or system was to be of permanent obligation, conveys to my mind strong reason for believing, that from the *outset* it was understood what system should prevail. We find frequent recognition of the duty of submitting to ecclesiastical authorities, and discussions as to the proper qualifications for office, but no question seems ever to have been raised as to the nature of those authorities, or the position, gradations, and several duties of the officers. And why was this? The most natural explanation seems that the ecclesiastical system was fixed and understood and unhesitatingly received from the beginning.

In view of such facts, and we deem them plainly deducible from the record, it would appear unjustifiable to abandon the apostolic system, unless change of times should make the obligation cease, with its reason. In questions of this sort it is becoming, in-

* Vide, Archbishop Whately's Kingdom of Christ.

stead of diligently inquiring how *far* we may go, without neglect or breach of duty, to avail ourselves gladly of a *hint* as to the divine will. And it should be borne in mind that while many of the most important questions of right and expediency, pertaining to the kingdom of nature, as well as to the kingdom of grace, can only be settled upon *probable* grounds, yet the smallest preponderance of evidence will create an obligation, to be recognised by the wakeful conscience.*

But can the offices and ministry, under the apostolic constitution, be so clearly ascertained as to relieve honest doubts? Learned and able men, it is said, differ widely in their views; some saying that Episcopacy prevailed, others that Parity obtained uni-

* "Probability," says Bishop Butler, "is the very guide of life. In questions of difficulty, or such as are thought so, where more satisfactory evidence cannot be had, or is not seen, if the result of examination be that there appears upon the whole, any, the lowest, presumption on one side, and none on the other, or a greater presumption on one side, though in the lowest degree greater, this determines the question, even in matters of speculation, and in matters of practice will lay us under an absolute formal obligation, in point of prudence and of interest, to act upon that presumption or low probability, though it be so low as to leave the mind in very great doubt which is the truth."—Intro. to Anal.

versally; while others still contend that Congregational power was the highest known in the first ages.

It is owned, that after generations of men have been educated in certain opinions their minds become so settled in the faith of their religious guides, it is hard for them to see any testimony tending to upset their own notions.

A singular instance of the power of prejudice was manifested some years ago.* An ancient manuscript contained an important proof text, bearing upon the divinity of our Lord. The letters had become almost illegible, from lapse of time. The signification of a word depended upon the question whether a line was drawn across a Greek letter. If so, the word meant Jehovah; if otherwise, it was only a relative pronoun. The orthodox, by help of a microscope, could see the mark; the Unitarians could not.

Episcopalians, Presbyterians and Congregationalists are all clear that the Apostolic Church constitution can be *seen* in the New Testament, but they differ totally as to *what* they see. It does not follow that there need be much doubt, if prejudice were thrown aside. Our own convictions are strong, that substantially† the

* This occurrence is given from memory, and may not be accurate in the details.

† I say *substantially*, because it is yet to be shown that any church polity, now existing in the world, is entirely conformed

same ecclesiastical system which exists in the church of England, and in the Protestant Episcopal church of this country, was the constitution established by the inspired apostles.

And we think the experience of centuries has

to the apostolic institutions. Such exact conformity is not to be expected, if indeed it were desirable. In so far as the apostolic institutions were based upon known and universal principles of human nature, they might well remain unchanged, but in those details, which being not essential to the life and efficacy of the government, were designed only to adapt it to circumstances and times, they would naturally undergo mutations. And he who, looking back from some favourite system of ecclesiastical regimen to the simple annals of Paul, and James and Peter, shall expect to find in the system prevailing among unlettered believers, hiding themselves from the sword of persecution, assembling for divine worship in the upper chamber of private houses, and governed by inspired rulers, every check and balance and provision, which subsequent ages have made necessary for the church, adapting it to the new wants of modern society, habits, and customs and laws, may perhaps be convinced, and with equal propriety, that the cloak Paul left at Troas was identical with the modern garment of that name, and that the books he asked Timothy to bring were handsomely printed and bound volumes, like those of our day.

Such notions are the dreams of visionary theorists, easily satisfied that what now is best must always have existed, and that what they think should be taught in scripture is assuredly revealed, either in palpable statement or hidden meaning.

proved, and the history of our day sustains the fact, that the apostolic plan is adapted to our times. We believe it is based upon principles which will suit it to *all* times, while human nature remains unchanged.

To adhere to it, then, is, we believe, our bounden duty, and may the day be far distant when its hold upon the public mind shall be weakened, and its obligation less strongly felt.

An interesting inquiry next arises as to the position of those who do not conform to this apostolic system. Some would deny their title to membership in Christ's church. But if the view we maintain be correct, then all who are regenerate in heart and life, belong to the true fold, however far through erroneous notions of duty they may err. And there can be little doubt, we think, in any reflecting mind, that God's Spirit tabernacles in many a soul, beyond the pale of what we esteem the apostolic constitution, and that large and efficient bodies of Christians are found labouring vigorously and successfully in extending the Redeemer's cause. May Heaven's richest blessings ever be with them, and prosper their labours of love, and may the voice of unauthorized assertion be silenced, which would gainsay their right to a place in that kingdom which, being founded in infinite compassion, owns all for its subjects who love God with unfeigned hearts.

A different question from this is that which refers to the validity of non-episcopal ordination and sacra-

ments, and the title of non-episcopal organizations to the name of churches. These points are important, and deserve a careful examination, but they are not involved in an inquiry which seeks the nature and extent of the Holy Catholic Church; because a man may agree with the author in his theory, with respect to the universal church, and yet hold an affirmative or negative opinion upon these other topics.*

It may not be out of place, however, to express the opinion, that while each separate church is left free to determine, in the light of reason, scripture, and apostolic precedent, how far it is right and wise to recognise official acts, emanating from authorities not deemed apostolic in constitution, yet it would be unjustifiable to pronounce all such acts invalid, because scripture has no where affirmed that ecclesiastical rites and sacraments can only be administered effectively by one set of men. And, though ourselves bound to obey a *hint* of the divine will, deduced even by remote inference, yet we should refrain from condemnation of other views and practices, where the letter of inspired teaching ceases.

And there is no scripture warrant for the notion that

* Those of course who hold to a catholic church, compounded of individual churches, are obliged to settle these questions, because they make the same door of entrance to the individual and the general.

ecclesiastical authority and being are united indissolubly with any one form of polity or order of ministry. The call for such warrant is returned by profound silence, or by long-drawn and most unsatisfactory deductions. An inverted pyramid of argument is built upon some jot or tittle of scripture never designed by the inspired penman to be so construed, and logically connected additions, fraught with eternal interests, are continually made, until the immense fabric totters from want of adequate support, and its architects and proprietors are forced to search the neighbouring ground of human tradition for props to hold up a system which finds no foundation in the word of God. The fact that maintainers of exclusive church dogmas endeavour to exalt the authority of Patristic testimony, is strong evidence that themselves are convinced of the absence of any scripture warrant for their views.

The church makes herself visible, we find, in good works, in her ministry, sacraments, government and public worship. Enlightening the mind, established in the heart, ruling the will, she reforms man's whole nature, and constitutes a sacred company of believing, holy men.

CHAPTER V.

DIVISIONS IN CHRIST'S CHURCH.

THE apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, says: "I hear that there be divisions among you, and I partly believe it," (1 Cor. xi. 18.) Well might the apostle believe that which is founded deep in the nature of man, and which is the result of well known and well established principles. Well might he believe there were *divisions* in the church,* when he knew how varied are the feelings and views of men, and how certain these individual peculiarities are to manifest themselves in all human organizations.

The ecclesiastical separations of doctrine and observance, occurring in St. Paul's day, were but the beginnings of wide and deep lines, which succeeding

* It is important to remark, as Dr. Stone does in his universal church, that $\sigma\chi\iota\sigma\mu\alpha$ denotes a division *in* the church, not a separation *from* it. There is no foundation in the New Testament for the application of the word heresy to *doctrinal* differences, and of schism to *practical* variations. We shall use the word division to include both kinds of difference, and with reason, for one usually follows the other.

centuries have drawn among professing disciples of Jesus. There were then *little ripples* on the bosom of that great ocean of catholic truth and love, which is now agitated by distinct billows, mountain high and tempest-driven. There was then a distant, foreboding sound of coming strife, which has since waxed louder and louder, till the clash of theological weapons, and the din of religious contest, and the perpetual roar of ecclesiastical artillery fills the towns and cities of all Christian countries, and reverberates from village to village, and dies away with faint echo amid the far off valleys. Divisions in Christ's church are now a prominent, glaring, existing fact, challenging our consideration. I propose to consider their *causes*, their *consequences*, and the *duties* growing out of them.

I. The causes of divisions in Christ's church are partly unavoidable, and therefore innocent, partly wilful, and therefore sinful, in their nature.

The church in heaven has no schisms. The angelic hosts, with perfect vision, all see God's truth alike, and with glad celerity mind the same things and walk by the same rules. But men, depraved by nature, see not truth in its just and accurate lineaments, because they look through sin-bleared eyes, and a sensuous distorted medium. They are all to some extent influenced in their views by the circumstances which surround them, and by the education which, perhaps without their own option, has been given them. While, therefore, we believe every man is

left free enough to make him responsible for his opinions, and while we believe God suffers none to be so blinded by influences not under their control, as to prevent their understanding and receiving his gospel, while we believe all men, coming to the study of God's word with honest minds, willing to know the truth, will arrive at substantially the same views in regard of the great saving truths of redemption; yet we believe, the stand point of each individual being different from that of others, his views of truth will take their shape, to some extent, in spite of himself, from the mental constitution God has given him and from the circumstances in which God has placed him. Hence there will arise differences of opinion, not implying wilful opposition to the truth upon many questions of biblical interpretation.

If, indeed, there were, as some contend, an infallible authority in the church for interpreting the Bible, an authority before whose decisions all men were bound to humble themselves with unquestioning and unreasoning faith, then there would be *no differences* of opinion. There would be, in fact, no real opinion. There would be entire uniformity, but it would be the uniformity of death. The moment you permit men to think for themselves, and hold them responsible for their opinions, that moment you open the door for divisions, and these divisions, so far as they arise from honest difference of opinion, provided men use every exertion to attain the truth, may be *innocent*.

But while a blameless original cause of divisions in the church is thus found, it must not be supposed the most potent causes are of this nature. We believe in all ages, the main reason why heresies and schisms obtain, is because men love darkness rather than light. They are not earnest in seeking the truth; they suffer passion and unfounded prejudice and selfishness, and party spirit, and other base influences, to shut out from their eyes the truth.

This appears to have been the chief cause of divisions in the days of the Apostles. Ambitious men arose and established parties for their own purposes, and led their fellow Christians to adopt one side or the other. Against such St. Paul warned the Roman church. "Now I beseech you, brethren," he says, "mark them which cause offences and divisions contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them, for they are such as serve not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple," (Rom. xvi. 17, 18.) Among the Corinthians men seem to have arrayed themselves under the apostles, as if *they* were party leaders, instead of being co-workers in one great cause. "Now I beseech you, brethren," St. Paul writes, "by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me, of you,

my brethren, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ." "For are ye yet carnal; for whereas there is among you envying and strife and divisions, are ye not carnal and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul, and another I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal?" (1 Cor. i. 10, 12; iii. 3, 4.) The other apostles likewise warn against divisions, arising from wrong notions and feelings.

At the same time, however, they recognise the existence of honest and allowable differences of opinion, and of various practices, not inconsistent with the principles of Gospel truth.

The earliest division of this kind was between those who had formerly been Jews, and those who were converted from the Gentiles. The Christians of Jewish origin brought with them many notions and habits, pertaining to their ancient faith; whereas, the Gentile believers were perhaps impatient of the unfounded and scrupulous conduct of their Jewish brethren. The Jewish Christians could not at first realize that the outward rites and institutions, to which they had been accustomed, were entirely done away. They kept the first day of the week, but they likewise hallowed the seventh day, their old Sabbath. They observed the time-honored fasts and festivals of Judaism. They abstained from meats condemned by

the ceremonial law. The rite of circumcision was still practised.

The Gentile converts looked with suspicion upon these remnants of the system of bondage, especially when the attempt was made to secure their allegiance to them.

A considerable portion of St. Paul's epistles is devoted to the settlement of questions growing out of this difference of education. He declares that these are not things essential to the true faith or church membership, but that, if any chose to practise them, their weakness ought to be borne with. If, however, even the Jews trusted in circumcision, he told them Christ would be of no avail to them; that the true circumcision is not outward in the flesh, but inward of the heart. He insisted that the Jews had no right to impose the custom upon the Gentiles.

In the same manner, with regard to the observance of special days not recognised by our Lord, but yet not forbidden by him, he says: "One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, to the Lord he regardeth it; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he regardeth it not," (Rom. xiv. 5, 6.)

And with reference to the similar questions about lawful and unlawful meats, he says: "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all

things; another who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth, for God hath received him." "He that eateth, to the Lord he eateth, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks," (Rom. xiv. 1, 2, 6.)

It is plain, from these and many like passages, that the apostles recognised two classes of causes for differences in Christ's church; the one an honest difference of opinion, the other an unlawful influence of ambition, or prejudice, or envy, or passion, or self-interest.

The same two kinds of influence have ever been at work up to the present day, creating and perpetuating schisms in the body of our Lord. It is worthy of remark, however, that a division, commenced with lawful motives, may be continued from wrong principles, and so, on the contrary, a schism, which begins without just cause, may be adhered to from honest conviction. This distinction should be borne in mind, if we would form a correct estimate of present differences among Christians.

II. Having glanced at the causes of difference in Christ's church, let us look at the consequences. And here again we are compelled to recognise a two-fold distinction. As the causes of separations in belief or

practice are partly innocent and partly sinful, so the results are of mixed good and evil.*

It were better if all could be united in mind, heart and will, and it is mainly our own fault we are not so united; but the merciful Jehovah overrules the dissensions of his followers, so that their ill effects may be, to some extent, counterbalanced by beneficial tendencies.

The *evil* consequences of divisions in the church are a violation of Gospel charity and a waste of time.

It is the duty of all Christians to love each other, with pure hearts, fervently. Instead of this, we too often find them jealous and suspicious of each other—so far from rejoicing at the prosperity of every company of true Christians, some appear absolutely sorry that souls are converted to God by other means than those they employ, and in other folds than that to which they belong. Such a state of feeling is palpably inconsistent with catholic love, yet it seems to grow naturally out of the divisions existing in the Christian church.

Much valuable time is wasted in party strife and contention, which might be employed in winning souls to Christ. It was the mournful testimony of one

* Let it be remarked, in this whole chapter, we are not speaking of differences which virtually separate from Christ and his church, but of those which may exist among possessors of justifying faith. Differences separating entirely from the body of Christ, are unmixed evils.

of the greatest geniuses England ever saw,* that he had never known a man who was not more influenced by sectarian spirit than by Christian zeal. Such a statement is, we hope, exaggerated, but with shame it must be owned, a large portion of the energy which Christians might employ in spreading abroad the gospel, is prostituted to the unholy struggles of theological war and ecclesiastical rivalry. Too many members of the various Christian denominations seem more anxious to see their own Zion gain the pre-eminence, than to have God's name honoured and revered by all. They are more zealous and active in trying to pull down others, than they are to benefit the world; they compass sea and land to make a proselyte from some sister fold, while millions of unconverted men are beyond the reach of any gospel ministration, perishing in ignorance and sin.

Such are some of the evil results of divisions in the church, by which the progress of our Redeemer's kingdom is impeded, and occasion given the enemy to blaspheme. But if evil has followed schism, it has likewise, as before stated, been overruled for good.

Truth has been made clearer, and reduced to more definite forms by means of religious controversy.

* Coleridge.

Theology is a progressive science.* The great kingdom of revelation, like the kingdom of nature, lies open for man's study. The doctrines absolutely necessary for salvation are few and simple, as the secrets of nature, important for the supply of man's first bodily wants, are easy of comprehension. But he who, not being content merely to eat and drink, is desirous of knowing more concerning the world he inhabits than may be essential to the supply of his fleshly appetites, will become a philosopher, a chemist and a geologist. And he who pores diligently over the pages of holy writ will find his views enlarging, and by comparing scripture with scripture, the temple of truth begins to appear, with its walls, buttresses and towers complete, behind the mists of ignorance.

Now, one great cause impelling men to diligent study of scripture has been the existence of various creeds and systems of religious practice. Each man is anxious to justify his own belief and conduct, by an appeal to the highest authority, and, therefore, he searches the scriptures. Even dangerous heresy has been useful in this way, by leading men to examine more carefully the foundation upon which they stand. Bright sparks of heavenly light have been struck out

* Nothing more is meant by this than is recognised by Bishop Butler, in his *Analogy*, page 244, Barnes' edition.

by the flint and steel of controversy. Systems of divinity, philosophically arranged, and supported upon scripture pillars, have gradually been erected as bulwarks of the orthodox faith against the assaults of error.

If any one will read the epistles of Ignatius, Clement, and Polycarp, and compare them with doctrinal standards of our day, he will be struck with the amazing progress which has been made in scripture knowledge. Doubtless great progress would have been made, at any rate, during so many centuries; but there is no question a vast many discoveries of gospel truth, and many exact statements of that truth would never have been made, but from the incitement of opposition and contest.

Another beneficial effect of divisions in the church, is the *purity* of life, now seen on the part of many Christians. Deficient as believers are in holiness, it cannot be questioned, that unless human nature were greatly changed, their defects would be much greater if all belonged to the same company. Just as political parties are useful, because they watch each other and are ready to spy out corruption; so have ecclesiastical divisions been useful, by checking each other. Christian men have not only been stirred up to live holily, in the sight of God, and unblameably before their fellow members; they have also been anxious to avoid rebuke from members of other folds. Who cannot see the wonderful effect upon Roman Catholics, in England and America, of the ever present

Protestant witness. If any reliance can be placed upon travellers, the morals of clergy and laity are much purer in the United States than in Italy. Any observant man can see a similar influence of protestant bodies upon each other.

Divisions have likewise been useful in producing a laudable *emulation* in good works. St. Paul says we should provoke one another to love and good works. Different bodies of Christians provoke one another to greater diligence and zeal in benevolent enterprises. I once heard a bishop of our church say, he had scarcely ever known an Episcopal church built in his diocese which had not been the occasion of building at least two other houses of worship. The zeal of the Episcopal Church in this country and England has been greatly stirred up by the hearty and praiseworthy activity of non-episcopal bodies. The religious activity of all Christians in England and America, is beginning to influence the churches of Continental Europe; and we trust the circle of emulous practical love may extend, until the whole world shall be made acquainted with the tidings of redeeming mercy.

III. It remains to speak of the duties growing out of divisions in the Church.

And it should be remembered, at the outset, that, however much good may have resulted, through the intervention of a kind Providence, from the numerous schisms existing in the world, wilful and needless separations from our fellow believers, in doctrine or

practice, are sinful. Because God may bring good out of evil, it does not follow that evil becomes good.

There is no difficulty in understanding that the greatest sins may result in much good to the world. Herod, Pontius Pilate, the High Priest, and soldiers, conspiring against the holy Jesus, were guilty of black and deep transgression; yet the consequences of their anger and murder have been life and joy to the world. And, if those who pierced the natural body of Christ and who cast lots for his seamless garments were fulfilling God's wise purposes for man's salvation, so, in like manner, may the founders of schisms, who tear in pieces the mystical body of our Lord, and make gain of that mantle of security he bestows on the elect, be instruments of great good to the universal church. But the nature of schism remains the same. It is a grievous sin, and one we should abhor and avoid.

When the apostle wrote to the Corinthians, telling them of the rumoured divisions among them, he did not speak of it as other than a report of sin. He uniformly exhorts them to be of one mind, and to walk by the same rule. "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord," he writes to the Ephesians, "beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the *unity* of the *Spirit* in the *bond* of *peace*," (Eph. iv. 1—3.) "Now the God of peace," he

says, to the Romans, "grant you to be *like-minded* one toward another according to Christ Jesus; that ye may with one *mind* and one *mouth* glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," (Rom. xv. 5, 6.) "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another," (Rom. xiv. 19.) "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so, we being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another," (1 Cor. xii. 12.) "Be kindly affectioned one towards another, with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another," (Rom. xii. 10.) "Now, I beseech you, brethren, by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same things, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment," (1 Cor. i. 10.)

And a greater than Paul, just before his crucifixion, lifted his eyes to heaven, and said, "Holy Father, keep through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are." "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also, who shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may be also one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. And the glory which thou hast given me, I have given them, that they may

be one, even as we are one; I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one," (John xvii. 11—23.)

In the face of such precepts and admonitions of St. Paul, and of such a prayer of our blessed Redeemer, wilful separations among Christians cannot be regarded as other than sinful.

But we must take the Christian world as we find it, divided into numberless sects, and inquire what is our duty. And there will be few who will not say, at once, that as much as in us lies, we should strive to lessen the differences of opinion, and to heal the separations in practice which obtain so widely. And this is to be accomplished, not by harsh denunciations of those who differ from us, but by a calm setting forth of our own views, by a candid examination of the views of others, by a Christian forbearance towards those who cannot see as we see, and who do not, in all respects, as we do. We should gladly recognise a Christian brother wherever we find him, whether in the fold we think best and most scriptural or not, and however much his opinions may differ from our own; remembering we too are liable to error, and that our brother may as well blame us for not agreeing with him, as we blame him for not agreeing with us.

It should always be remembered there is no admission into the great church of Christ but by spiritual regeneration, springing from true faith; and that all who possess this qualification are heirs with Christ

and members of his kingdom. This inward baptism of the heart forms a bond of union, a common ground upon which we may all meet.

Still, it is a source of regret that partakers of the same hope should not be more united in opinion and practice, and it is our duty to use all proper exertion to bring about more uniformity in these respects. A foundation for this better understanding will be laid in a clear view of the nature and extent of the Holy Catholic Church. So long as different denominations anathematize and unchurch all who differ from them; feelings of ill-will and party spirit are increased, and the wounds of Christ's body become deeper and more grievous. But let a liberal, catholic, gospel theory be established, let believers of different folds feel themselves joined in one ark of safety, and there will be some chance of talking over, with candour, their differences.

And when such a spirit of honest consideration is excited, it will be found many fierce contests about high metaphysical doctrines have been mere battles of words, and the real differences of *opinion* among Christians have been greatly exaggerated. It will also be found, that differences of *practice*, such as have been deemed almost essential to salvation by some, are allowable differences in that kingdom of liberty wherein Christ has made us free.

It is hardly to be expected, indeed, that there will ever be entire coincidence of thought, feeling and

act, among professing disciples, so long as the church remains militant. Neither is it needful, if the bitterness of controversy be done away, and new-born sons of God, learn to bear with each other's failings, and to allow each other the privilege claimed for themselves, of liberty to think. We should cease to feel as if our fellow Christians were fighting against us, because they do not agree with us in all respects. In that noble band of patriots, which achieved our national independence, were men of different commonwealths, different views and feelings, different habits and different tactics. The cool, determined men of the north, and the gallant sons of the south, fought side by side in the holy cause of freedom. Christians, though belonging to different ecclesiastical commonwealths, should feel that they are struggling for a world's salvation, under one invisible, omnipotent leader. The hand of brother should not be raised against brother, but all our energies and powers should be exerted for the common cause.

It is not at all needful that denominational peculiarities should be done away, or that there should be any amalgamation of services among men of different creeds and systems. We believe the true way to be at peace with all, is to let each do his own work, in his own way. There may be co-operation in a few great enterprises, but beyond this we do not expect much in the way of outward union. Attempts to form closer external bonds have usually resulted in dis-

cord. At present, we believe it best to remain satisfied with a recognition of true spiritual union, and to abide every man in his own ranks, looking steadfastly unto the great Captain of salvation, who cares little for outward badges and shows, but who looketh on the heart.

THE END.



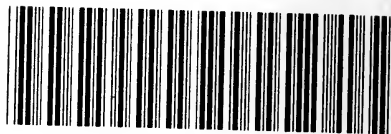
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